



Montana Arts Council

2009 Artist's Innovation Award for Visual Arts  
Application

Lea Zoltowski  
615 N. 16th St.  
Billings, MT 59101, US  
406-657-2149  
lzoltowski@msubillings.edu

Submitted: 5/2/2009 12:41:24 AM CST/CDT

## Form

1. **Website address.**  
[www.leazoltowski.com](http://www.leazoltowski.com), [www.claydemo.com](http://www.claydemo.com)
2. **Which primary medium best describes your artwork?**  
ceramic sculpture
3. **Describe what innovations you have made in your artwork and/or your process.**

I want to challenge the passive spectatorship of art, and by extension, media and life. Real and implied viewer interactions to my large scale ceramic multi-media artwork include touching, tasting, smelling, looking deeply into, winning to take with you as a souvenir, and destroying. To challenge the safe, static, closed nature of most ceramics, I am working modularly and assemble numerous sections over steel rods to create large scale ceramic sculptures that confront you on a bodily scale. I believe that pedestals are not the best display option and build my own custom display tables, shelves, and plaques. I am now using a HVLP Spray System to paint these displays. I incorporate subtle tones of vinyl graphics and text onto the gallery walls, display units, and actual ceramic pieces to fully address the installation space and question the transition from two to three-dimensional. I am currently experimenting with vinyl paint mask applied directly to the ceramic surface and underglaze and overglaze print on clay techniques (screen transfers and laser decals) to imbed a literal subtext into the ceramic surface.

I have developed a system of handbuilding ceramics with paper and plastic templates which allow me to systematically create, duplicate, and texture any form. I am employing moldmaking and slip casting to address multiplicity and create fields of hundreds of sculptures which transform from safe-soft to hard-fragile. Because these multiples are not precious to me, I can freely experiment with surface treatments and the rules of audience engagement and moral dilemma at different exhibitions. To encourage touch and viewer interactivity, I am incorporating more stuffed leather, fabric, and spandex components into the ceramic sculptures. Utilizing soft stuffed versions of ceramic sculptures in the same shape and coloration allows me to expand the viewers experience and easily address the space above ones head. I am currently imbedding motion activate sound boxes into the Stingers and Narwhals to make the sculptures more reactive and unsettling. To learn if I am creating the content I intend, I would like to more effectively document audience reaction and interactions to my sculptures with a motion activated surveillance system. I am interested in the possibilities of video documentation becoming a piece in itself given the prevalence of surveillance in the public space.

I studied ceramics at some of the top ranked institutions nationally and have worked under a number of prominent ceramic artists while on residencies. I enjoy teaching and created [www.claydemo.com](http://www.claydemo.com) in July 2008 as a free educational resource for artists and educators anywhere. [www.claydemo.com](http://www.claydemo.com) currently has over 15 ceramics demonstration videos shot simultaneously with three different cameras, so that the student always has the best viewpoint. I will be expanding the content this summer to include 10 additional advanced topics. This project involved substantial start up time and effort, but has been an invaluable teaching aid. It is time consuming to recreate a demonstration for each student who missed it, has questions, or needs a refresher. My [www.claydemo.com](http://www.claydemo.com) videos are available free, online, anytime.

**4. Describe how the artwork samples you submitted illustrate the evolution of your work.**

The attached artwork samples illustrate the evolution of my work over the last three years in exhibitions in OH, KY, WI, MT, WA, and AZ. This month I installed three concurrent solo exhibitions of my work *Predilection* at the Robert Graves Gallery of Wenatchee Valley College in Wenatchee, WA, *Compunction* at the Esvelt Gallery of Columbia Basin College in Pasco, WA and *Quench* at Eye Lounge Contemporary Art Gallery in Phoenix, AZ during the NCECA (National Council on Education in the Ceramic Arts) From Dawn to Digital Conference. These exhibitions were the result of national juried call for submissions. It has been interesting to see how and if viewer interactions with my work change based on geographic location.

The large 6,000+ NCECA Conference attendance allowed me to experiment with luring large numbers (2,000+ gallery visitors) to navigate the horns and defense mechanisms to consume exotic dried fruit fragments placed strategically in the nasal cavities and innards of *To Fight or Flirt?*, *Mammut*, and *Armour*. I also raffled off small souvenir ceramic sculptures at the reception to anyone who completed my free survey on guilt and desire. Over 400 gallery visitors completed my probing questions which will be valuable research for future pieces.

I also incorporate the intended audience reaction or bodily interface into the titles of my work. In *Taste Your Luck* one can bite into cast white and dark chocolate tongues with imbedded moralizing fortunes and chances to win souvenir versions of *Bone*. I use high quality edibles to emanate a mouthwatering aroma in the space and encourage a mouth watering hunger and fear of real and moral contamination. The exposed fortunes and bitten off tongue stumps remain to serve as a reminder of what it feels like to bite your own tongue and to cater to the voyeurism of the public.

*Fountain* is a 12 tall spider crab built of 40 separate sections which circulates light and dark chocolate and is covered with skewers and edibles to consume. The humming and whirring of the circulating chocolate seems to make the strangely sensual creature come alive. No holds bar after the first dip and a feeding frenzy ensues.

*800 Stingers* is composed of 800 slip cast and soft stuffed fabric sting rays. For \$10.00 you can choose to adopt and take one home with you or destroy and step on a stinger. Of course you cannot destroy the soft stingers.

I am interesting in imbedding motion activated sound and video into the ceramic sculptures to make them more reactive and interactive to viewers. I believe positive developments in the relevance of ceramics in contemporary art are possible by addressing and integrating technology.

**5. Regarding public access to your work and artwork, describe a low-cost or no-cost activity to take place during the grant cycle that will convey your innovative work and artwork to other Montanans.**

To promote public access to my artwork, I would like to present a free artist lecture and demonstration at MSU Billings, the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, MT, and/or other venues in MT. I am also interested in pursuing lecture and exhibition opportunities statewide, nationally, and abroad.

I will also be compiling an email list of K-12 Art Educators statewide to invite them to utilize my free educational website: [www.claydemo.com](http://www.claydemo.com) to supplement classroom curriculums. I am interested in publicizing this free educational opportunity to Montanans. Publicity by email correspondence will eliminate costly printing and postage expenses.

**6. I certify I am a resident of the state of Montana and a Citizen of the United States. (Residency requires having lived in Montana for at least one full year prior to the application deadline.)**

Yes

**7. I am at least 18 years old.**

Yes

**8. I am not currently a degree-seeking student (graduate or undergrad) and will not be during the grant period (July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010).**

Yes

**9. Permission to reprint. I permit MAC to reproduce my artwork images to use for publicity and informational purposes.**

Yes

10. I certify that all appropriate release rights were obtained for my artwork. Where applicable, I certify that all appropriate photo rights and permissions have been obtained with regard to images of children's faces associated with recognizable landmarks.  
Yes
11. I am not on the Montana Arts Council staff or a member of its current governing body, nor am I connected to them by one degree of relationship by blood, marriage or household.  
Yes
12. I certify that all information I have provided is true and understand that submitting this application is the date of consent.  
Yes



### "800\_Stingers"

H: 3" x W: 10 x D: 7" each, 800 total  
Cone 04 Earthenware and soft stuffed fabric  
2009

Signage posted "Adopt or destroy for \$10.00. No open toed shoes."



### "Hallway of Tentacles"

H: 15' x W: 12' x D: 40'  
Spandex and Cone 04 Earthenware  
2006



### "The Fountain"

H: 144" x W: 50" x D: 50"  
Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, Chocolate Fountains  
2006

Attendant on hand at opening reception to monitor and restock light and dark chocolate circulation. Covered with skewers, strawberries, marshmallows, pretzels, and bon bons at reception. Splattered chocolate aftermath on view remainder of exhibition.



### "Taste Your Luck"

H: 84" x W: 40" x D: 40"  
Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, chocolate tongues  
2006

White and dark cast chocolate tongues have imbedded moralizing fortunes and chances to win souvenir versions of "Bone" sculpture. After math (bitten tongue stumps and exposed fortunes) on view remainder of exhibition.



### "Taste Your Luck detail"

H: 84" x W: 40" x D: 40"

Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, Chocolate Tongues  
2006

White and dark cast chocolate tongues have imbedded moralizing fortunes and chances to win souvenir versions of "Bone" sculpture. After math (bitten tongue stumps and exposed fortunes) on view remainder of exhibition. White and dark cast chocolate tongues have imbedded moralizing fortunes and chances to win souvenir versions of "Bone" sculpture. After math (bitten tongue stumps and exposed fortunes) on view remainder of exhibition.



### "Bone"

H: 46" x W: 53" x D: 36"

Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, leather  
2006

Small ceramic souvenir versions of this sculpture were awarded to winners of "Taste Your Luck" and guilt & desire surveys. (2006, 2007, 2009)



### "Nutstand Help Yourself"

H: 40" x W: 25" x D: 21"

Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, Nuts, Nutcrackers  
2007



### "Sater"

H: 48" x W: 52" x D: 35"

Soda Fired Porcelain, Leather, Jelly Bellies  
2008



### "Sater detail"

H: 48" x W: 52" x D: 35"

Soda Fired porcelain, Leather, Jelly Bellies  
2008

**"Scensor and Antlerform Sconces"**

H: 80" x W: 39" x D: 39", Sconces 29" x 29" x 15"  
Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, Sage, Incense  
2008

**"NCECA Quench Exhibition"**

Eye Lounge Contemporary Art Gallery, Phoenix, AZ  
Cone 04 Earthenware, Leather, MDF, spandex  
2009

**"Armour detail"**

H: 75" x W: 69" x D: 70"  
Porcelain and leather  
2009

**"To Fight or To Flirt?"**

H: 58" x W: 63 x D: 40"  
Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, leather  
2009

**"Armour Too"**

H: 33" x W: 24" x D: 32"  
Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, Leather  
2009



**"To Fight or To Flirt Too"**

H: 34" x W: 24" x D: 22"

Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, Leather  
2009

**"Mammut"**

H: 52" x W: 62" x D: 31"

Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, Leather  
2009

**"Mammut too"**

H: 36" x W: 24" x D: 17"

Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, Leather  
2009

**"Savor Tu"**

H: 36" x W: 24" x D: 18"

Cone 04 Earthenware w/bisque slip, Leather  
2009





**"Lea Zoltowski"**

Artist Statement  
pdf  
2009

(Document)



**"Bob Durden"**

Curators Statement  
Quench  
2009

(Document)



**"Lea Zoltowski"**

Resume  
pdf  
2009

(Document)



"800\_Stingers"



"Hallway of Tentacles"



"The Fountain"



"Taste Your Luck"



"Taste Your Luck detail"



"Bone"



"Nutstand Help Yourself"



"Sater"



"Sater detail"



"Scensor and Antlerform Sconces"



"NCECA Quench Exhibition"



"Armour detail"



"To Fight or To Flirt?"



"Armour Too"



"To Fight or To Flirt Too"



"Mammut"



"Mammut too"



"Savor Tu"